



SHARPE JAMES
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07102

JAMES ASKS HUD SECRETARY TO RECONSIDER

ARTS CENTER FUNDING

ATLANTA--Newark Mayor Sharpe James made an impassioned plea today to HUD Secretary Jack Kemp, imploring the federal official to reconsider his decision to block a \$1.2 million grant for a performing arts center in New Jersey's largest city.

James, who is attending the National League of Cities Convention in Atlanta this week, was one of a handful of mayors from around the country to meet privately with the HUD secretary shortly before Kemp addressed a luncheon session of NLC delegates.

Earlier this week the federal official had pledged to do everything he could to block spending for a myriad of community development projects throughout the country, including the Newark arts center.

"The City of Newark--once one of the most economically distressed cities in this nation--is on the road to recovery, and the arts center would open the doors for a permanent cure that will make our city a dominant cultural and commercial force in the tri-state area," said the Mayor.

James contended the proposed center is "an extraordinary example of a public/private partnership that not only helped to conceive the project, but is pledged to continue working together to make it a reality."

He maintained the \$1.2 million grant would have the highest leveraging power of any HUD expenditure, explaining the federal funding is critical to a package involving \$33 million in private financing and \$33 million in state funds.

"In addition to establishing Newark as a cultural mecca, the arts center will spawn commercial, retail and residential development that will bring jobs and ratables to our city," James told the Secretary.

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Responding to charges by Kemp that the the HUD projects had little merit other than political influence, the Newark official asserted, "In the Newark arts center project, nothing could be further from the truth. Since its very inception this plan required and has received bi-partisan support at the State, County and local level.

"This is the type of project that will have multiple effects on our city. It will be a catalyst for redevelopment of the waterfront and Military Park area. It will strengthen local government financially and serve as a source of pride for residents struggling to reclaim their community, and it will assist in creating and maintaining a bi-racial community," James declared.

"The New Jersey Performing Arts Center is vital to Newark's continued resurgence and prosperity in the 21st century," the Mayor maintained. "If there is one urban center that represents the type of city HUD is pledged to assist, it is Newark New Jersey, and the arts center is key to our future"

The \$1.2 million HUD grant would be used to create public open spaces and infrastructure which are designed to attract people at all times, regardless of whether or not there is an ongoing activity at the arts center, according to James.